

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A CHARMING FELLOW.

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CHAPTER I.

"To be frank with you, Mr. Diamond, I don't believe Dr. Bodkin understands my son's genius."

"I beg your pardon, madam, you said your son's—?"

"Genius, sir; the bent of his genius. Algy's is not a mechanical mind."

Mrs. Errington slightly tossed her head as she uttered the word "mechanical."

Mr. Diamond said "Oh!" and then sat silent.

The room was very quiet. The autumn day was fading, and the mingling of twilight and firelight, and the stillness of the scene, were conducive to mute meditation. It was a long, low room, with an uneven floor, a whitewashed ceiling crossed by heavy beams, and one large bow window. It was furnished with the spindle-legged chairs and tables in use in the last century. A crimson drugget covered the floor, and in front of the hearth lay a rug, made of scraps of black and coloured cloth, neatly sewn together in a pattern. Over the high wooden mantelpiece hung, on one side, a faded water-colour sketch of a gentleman, with powdered hair; and on the other, an oval miniature of much later date, which represented a fair, florid young lady, with large languid blue eyes, and a red mouth, somewhat too full-lipped. Notwithstanding the years which had elapsed since the miniature was painted, it was still sufficiently like Mrs. Errington, to be recognised for her portrait. There was an old

harpsichord in the room, and a few books on hanging shelves. But the only handsome or costly objects to be seen, were some delicate blue and white china cups and saucers, which glistened from an oaken corner-cupboard; and a large work-box of tortoise-shell, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, lined with amber satin, and fitted with all the implements of needlework, in richly chased silver. The box, like the china cupboard, stood wide open to display its contents, and was evidently a subject of pride to its possessor. It was entirely incongruous with the rest of the furniture, which, although decent and serviceable, was very plain, and rather scanty.

Nevertheless the room looked snug and homelike. The coal-fire burnt with a deep glowing light; a small copper kettle was singing cheerily on the hob; tea-things were laid on a table in front of the fire; and a fitful, moaning wind, that rattled now and then against the antique casement, enhanced the comfort of the scene by its suggestion of forlorn chilliness without.

But however the influences of the time and place might incline Mr. Diamond to silence, they had no such effect on Mrs. Errington.

After a short pause, during which she seemed to be awaiting some remark from her companion, she observed once more, "No; I do not think the doctor understands Algy's genius. And that is why I was anxious to ask your advice, on this proposition of Mr. Filthorpe's."

"But, madam, why should you suppose me likely to understand Algernon better than Dr. Bodkin does?"

"Oh, because— In the first place, you are younger, nearer Algy's own age."

"Ah! There is a wide gap, though,

between his eighteen and my eight-and-twenty—a wider gap than the mere ten years would necessarily make in all cases.”

Mrs. Errington glanced at the speaker, and thought, in the maternal pride of her heart, that there was indeed a wide difference between her joyous, handsome Algernon and Matthew Diamond, second master at the Whitford Grammar School; and she thought, too, that the difference was all to her son's advantage. Mr. Diamond was a grave-looking young man, with a spare, strong figure, and a face which, in repose, was neither handsome nor ugly. His clean-shaven chin and upper lip were firmly cut, and he had a pair of keen grey eyes. But such as it was, it was a face which most persons who saw it often, fell into a habit of watching. It raised an indefinite expectation. You were instinctively aware of something latent beneath its habitual expression of seriousness and reserve. What the “something” might be, was variously guessed at according to the temperament of the observer.

“Then there is another reason why I wished to consult you,” pursued Mrs. Errington. “I have a great opinion of your judgment, from what Algy tells me. I assure you Algy thinks an immense deal of your talents, Mr. Diamond. You must not think I flatter you.”

“No,” replied Mr. Diamond, very quietly, “I do not think you flatter me.”

“And therefore I have told you the state of the case quite openly. And I would not have you hesitate to give your advice, from any fear of disagreeing with my opinion.”

Mr. Diamond leaned his elbow on the table, and his face on his hand, which he held so as to hide his mouth—an habitual posture with him—and looked gravely at Mrs. Errington.

“I trust,” continued the lady, “that I am superior to the weakness of requiring blind acquiescence from people.”

Mrs. Errington spoke in a mellow, measured voice, and had a soft smiling cast of countenance. Both these were frequently contradicted in a startling manner by the words she uttered: for, in truth, the worthy lady's soul and body were no more like each other, than a peach-stone is like a peach. Her velvety softness was not affected, but it was merely external, and the real woman was nothing less than tender. Sensitive persons did not fare very well with Mrs.

Errington; who, withal, had the reputation of being an exceedingly good-natured woman.

“If you think my advice worth having —” said Mr. Diamond.

“I do really. Now pray don't be shy of speaking out!” interrupted the lady, reassuringly.

“I must tell you that I think your cousin's offer is much too good to be refused, and opens a prospect which many young men would envy.”

“You advise us to accept it?”

“Yes.”

“Why then, Mr. Diamond, I don't believe you understand Algy one bit better than the doctor does!” exclaimed Mrs. Errington, leaning back in her chair, and folding her large white hands together in a resigned manner.

“I warned you, you know, that I might not,” answered Mr. Diamond, composedly.

“A prospect which many young men would envy!” Well, perhaps, ‘many young men,’ yes; I dare say. But for Algy! Do but think of it, Mr. Diamond; to sit all day on a high stool in a musty office! You must own that, for a young fellow of my son's spirit, the idea is not alluring.”

“Oh, if the question be merely for Algernon to choose some method of passing his time, which shall be alluring——”

Mrs. Errington drew herself up a little. “No;” said she, “that is certainly not the question, Mr. Diamond. At the same time, before embracing Mr. Filthorpe's offer, I thought it only reasonable to ask myself, ‘May we not do better? Can we not do better?’”

“I begin to perceive,” thought Matthew Diamond within himself, “that Mrs. Errington's meaning, when she asks ‘advice,’ is pretty much like that of most of her neighbours. Having already made up her mind how to act, she would like to be told that her decision is the best and wisest conceivable.” He said nothing, however, but bowed his head a little, to show that he was giving attention to the lady's discourse.

“We have an alternative, you must know,” said Mrs. Errington, turning her eyes languidly on Mr. Diamond, but not moving her head from its comfortable resting-place against the back of her well-cushioned arm-chair. “We are not bound hand and foot to this Bristol merchant. By the way, you spoke of him as my cousin——”

"I beg your pardon; is he not so?"

"No; not mine. My poor husband's," with a glance at the portrait over the mantelpiece. "None of my family ever had the remotest connection with commerce."

"Ha! The good fortune was all on the side of the Erringtons?"

This time Mrs. Errington turned her head, so as to look full at her interlocutor. There met her view the same calm forehead, the same steady eyes, the same sheltering hand gently stroking the upper lip, which she had looked upon a minute before.

"My good sir!" she answered, in a tone of patient explanation, "my own family, the Ancrams, were people of the very first quality in Warwickshire. My grandfather never stirred out without his coach and four!"

"Ah!"

"Oh, yes, Algy's prospects in life ought to be very, very different from what they are. Of course he ought to go to the university; but I cannot afford to send him there. I make no secret of my circumstances. College is out of the question for him, poor boy, unless he entered himself as a what-do-you-call-it? A sort of pauper, a sizar. And I suppose you would hardly advise him to do that!"

"No; I should by no means advise it. I was a sizar myself."

"Really? Ah well, then you know what it is. And I am quite sure it would never suit Algy's spirit."

"I am quite sure it would not."

Mrs. Errington's good opinion of the tutor's judgment, which had been considerably shaken, began to revive.

"I see you know something of his character," said she, smiling. "Well then, the case stands thus: Algy is turned eighteen; he has had the best education I could give him—indeed, my chief motive for settling in this obscure little hole, when I was left a widow, was the fact that Dr. Bodkin, who was an old acquaintance of my husband, was head of the Grammar School here, and I knew I could give my boy the education of a gentleman—up to a certain point—at small expense. He has had this offer from the Bristol man, and he has had another offer of a very different sort from my side of the house."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes; perhaps if I had begun by stating that circumstance, you might have modified your advice, eh, Mr. Diamond?" This was said in a tone of mild railery.

"Why," answered Mr. Diamond, slowly, "I must own that my advice usually does depend somewhat on my knowledge of the circumstances of the case under consideration."

"Now, that's candid—and I love candour, as I told you. The fact is, Lord Seely married an Ancram."

There was a pause. Mrs. Errington looked enquiringly at her companion. "You have heard of Lord Seely?" she said.

"I have seen his name in the newspapers, in the days when I used to read newspapers."

"He is a most distinguished nobleman."

Another pause.

"Well," continued Mrs. Errington, condescendingly, "I cannot expect all that to interest you, Mr. Diamond. Perhaps there may be a little family partiality, in my estimate of Lord Seely. However, be that as it may, he married an Ancram. She was of the younger branch, my father's second cousin. When Algy first began to turn his thoughts towards a diplomatic career——"

"Eh?"

"A diplomatic——Oh, didn't you know? Yes; he has had serious thoughts of it for some time."

"Algernon?"

"Certainly! And, in confidence, Mr. Diamond, I think it would suit him admirably. I fancy it is what his genius is best adapted for. Well, when I perceived this bent in him, I made—indirectly—application to Lady Seely, and she returned—also indirectly—a most gracious answer. She should be happy to receive Mr. Algernon Ancram Errington, whenever she was in town."

"Is that all?"

"All?"

"All that you have to tell me, to modify—and so on?"

"That would lead to more, don't you see? Lord Seely has enormous influence, and I don't know anyone better able to push the fortunes of a young man like Algy."

"But has he promised anything definite?"

"He could hardly do that, seeing that, as yet, he knows nothing of my son whatever! My dear Mr. Diamond, when you know as much of the world as I do, you will see that it does not do to rush at things in a hurry. You must give people time. Especially a man like Lord Seely,

who of course cannot be expected to—to—"

"Do you mean that you seriously contemplate dropping the substance of Filthorpe, for this shadow of Seely?"

"Mr. Diamond! What very extraordinary expressions!"

Mr. Diamond took his hand from his mouth, clasped both hands on his knee, and sat looking into the fire as abstractedly as if there had been no other person within sight or sound of him.

Mrs. Errington, apparently taking it for granted that his attitude was one of profound attention to herself, proceeded flowingly to justify her decision—for it evidently was a decision—to decline the Bristol merchant's offer of employment and a home for her son. Besides Algy's "genius," there were other objections. Mr. Filthorpe had a vulgar wife and a vulgar daughter. Of course they must be vulgar. That was clear. And who could say that they might not endeavour to entangle Algy in some promise, or engagement, to marry the daughter? Nay, it was very certain that they would make such an endeavour. Possibly—probably—that was old Filthorpe's real object in inviting his young relative to accept a place in his counting-house. Indeed, they might confidently consider that it was so. Of course Algy would be a bait to these people! And as to Lord Seely, Mr. Diamond did not know (how should he? seeing that he had been little more than a twelvemonth in Whitford, and out of that time had scarcely ever had an hour's converse with her) that she, Mrs. Errington, was a person rather apt to hide and diminish, than unduly blazon forth her family glories. And she was, moreover, scrupulous to a fault in the accuracy of all her statements. Nevertheless, she must say that there was, perhaps, no nobleman in England whose patronage would have more weight than his lordship's; and whether or not, the brilliancy of Algy's parts, and the charm of his manners, would be likely to captivate a man of Lord Seely's taste and cultivation. That she left to the sense and candour of any one who knew, and could appreciate her son!

Mr. Diamond uttered an odd, smothered kind of sound.

"Eh?" said Mrs. Errington, mellifluously.

There was no answer.

"Hulloa!" cried a blithe voice, as the

door was suddenly thrown open. "Why, you're all in the dark here!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Diamond, jumping to his feet, and then sitting down again, "I believe—I'm afraid I was almost asleep!"

CHAPTER II.

ALGERNON ERRINGTON came gaily into the dim room, bringing with him a gust of fresh, cold air. His first act was to stir the fire, which sent up a flickering blaze. The light played upon the tea-table and the two persons who sat at it; and also, of course, illuminated the new-comer's face and form, which were such as to justify much of his mother's pride in his appearance. He was of middle height, with a singularly elegant figure, and finely shaped hands and feet. His smooth, blooming face was, perhaps, somewhat too girlish-looking, but there was nothing effeminate in his bearing. All his movements were springy and elastic. His blue eyes—less large, but more bright than his mother's—were full of vivacity, and a smile of mischievous merriment played round his mouth.

"Mr. Diamond!" he exclaimed, as soon as he perceived who was the other occupant of the room besides his mother.

"You're late," said the tutor, pulling from his waistcoat-pocket a large silver watch, and examining the clumsy black figures on its face by the firelight.

"Why," said Algernon, "I had no idea you were here! I thought my mother had sent word to ask you to put off our reading this evening. You promised to write a note, mother. Didn't you send it?"

It appeared that Mrs. Errington had not sent a note, had not even written one, had forgotten all about it. Her mind was so full of other things! And then when Mr. Diamond appeared, she did not explain at once that Algernon would probably not come home in time for his lesson, because she wanted to have a little conversation with Mr. Diamond. And they began to talk, and the time slipped away: besides, she knew that Mr. Diamond had nothing to do of an evening, so it was not of much consequence, was it?

Algernon winced at this speech, and cast a quick, furtive look at his tutor, who, however, might have been deaf, for any sign he gave of having heard it. He rose from his chair, and, addressing Mrs. Errington, declared with his usual brevity

that, as no work was to be done, he must forthwith wish her "Good evening."

"Now, nonsense!" said Mrs. Errington. "You'll do nothing of the kind! Stay and have a cup of tea with us for once in a way."

"Thank you, no; I never—it is not my habit——"

"Not your habit to be sociable! I know that; and it is a great pity. What would you be doing at home? Only poring over books until you got a headache! A little cheerful society would do you all the good in the world. You were all but dropping asleep just now: and no wonder! I'm sure, after teaching all day in a close school, full of boys buzzing like so many blue-bottles, one would feel as stupid as an owl oneself!"

"Perhaps I am peculiarly susceptible to stupefying influences," said Mr. Diamond, with a rueful shake of the head. And, as he spoke, there played round his mouth the faint flicker of a smile.

"Now put your hat down, and take your seat!" cried Mrs. Errington, authoritatively.

"I am very sorry to seem ungrateful, but——"

"I had asked little Rhoda to come up after tea and keep me company, thinking I should be alone. But you won't mind Rhoda. She knows her place."

Mr. Diamond paused in the act of buttoning his coat across his breast. "You are very kind," he murmured.

"There, sit down, and I will undertake to give you a cup of excellent tea. I hope you know good tea when you get it? There are some people who couldn't tell my fine Pekoe from sloe-leaves. Algy, bring me the kettle."

And Mrs. Errington betook herself to the business of making tea. To her it seemed perfectly natural—almost a matter of course—that Matthew Diamond should stay, since she was kind enough to press it. But Algernon, who knew his tutor better, could not refrain from expressing a little surprise at his yielding.

"Why, mother," said he, as he poured the boiling water into the tea-pot, "you may consider yourself singled out for high distinction. Mr. Diamond has consented at your request to stay, after having said he would go! I don't believe there's another lady in Whitford who has been so honoured."

If Algernon had not been peering through the clouds of steam to ascertain

whether the tea-pot were full or not, he would have perceived an unwonted flush mount in Matthew Diamond's face up to the roots of his hair, and then slowly fade away.

"And how did you find the doctor and all of them?" asked Mrs. Errington of her son, when they were all seated at the tea-table.

"Oh, the doctor's all right. He only came in for a few minutes after morning school."

"What did he say to you, Algy?"

"Oh, I don't know: something about not altogether neglecting my studies now I had left school, whatever path in life I chose. He always says that sort of thing, you know," answered Algernon carelessly.

"And Mrs. Bodkin?"

"Oh, she's all right, too."

"And Minnie?"

"Oh, she's all—no; she was not quite so well as usual, I think. Mrs. Bodkin said she had had a bad attack of pain in the night. But Minnie didn't mention it. She never likes to be condoled with and pitied, you know. So of course I didn't say anything. It's so unpleasant to have to keep noticing people's health!"

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Errington. "What a misfortune for that girl to be a helpless invalid for the rest of her life!"

"Is her disorder incurable?" asked Mr. Diamond.

"Oh, quite, I believe. Spine, you know. An accident. And they say that when a child she was such an active creature."

"Her brain is active enough now," observed Mr. Diamond musingly, with his eyes fixed on the fire. "I don't know a keener, quicker intellect."

"What, Minnie Bodkin?" exclaimed Algernon, pausing in the demolition of a stout pile of sliced bread and butter. "I should think so! She's as clever as a man! I mean," he added, reading and answering his tutor's satirically-raised eyebrows, as rapidly as though he were replying to an articulate observation, "I mean—of course I know she's a deuced deal cleverer than lots of men. But I mean that Minnie Bodkin is clever after a manly fashion. Not a bit missish. By Jove! I wish I knew as much Greek as she does!"

"I do not at all approve of blue-stockings in general," said Mrs. Errington; "but in her case, poor thing, one must make allowances."

"I think she's pretty," announced Algernon, condescendingly.

"She would be if she didn't look so sickly. No complexion," said Mrs. Errington, intently observing her own florid face, unnaturally elongated, in the bowl of a spoon.

"Don't you think her pretty, sir?" asked Algernon, turning to Mr. Diamond.

"A great deal more than pretty."

"You don't go there very often, I think?" said Mrs. Errington interrogatively.

"No, madam."

"Well, now, you really ought. I know you would be welcome. The doctor has more than once told me so. And Mrs. Bodkin is so very affable! I'm sure you need not hesitate about going there."

Algernon jumped up to replenish the tea-pot, with an unnecessary amount of bustle, and began to rattle out a volley of lively nonsense, with the view of diverting his mother's attention from the subject of Mr. Diamond's neglect of the Bodkin family. He dreaded some rejoinder on the part of the tutor which should offend his mother beyond forgiveness. He had had experience of some of Matthew Diamond's blunt speeches, of which Dr. Bodkin himself was supposed to be in some awe. It was clearly no business of Mrs. Errington's where Mr. Diamond chose to bestow his visits; neither could she in any degree be aware what reasons he might have for his conduct. "And the worst of it is, he's quite capable of telling my mother so, if she goes too far," reflected Algernon. So he chatted and laughed, as if from overflowing good spirits, until the peril was past. This young gentleman was so quick and flexible, and had so buoyant a temperament, that he was reputed more careless and thoughtless than was altogether the case. His mind moved rapidly, and he had an instinctive habit of uttering the result of its calculations, in the most impulsive way imaginable. You could not tell, by observing Algernon's manner, whether he were giving you his first thought or his second.

When the meal was over, Mrs. Errington rang to have the table cleared. A little prim servant-maid, in a coarse, clean apron and bib, appeared at the sound of the bell, and began to gather the tea-things together. Algernon sat down at the old harpsichord, and, after playing a few chords, commenced singing softly in a pleasant tenor voice some fragments of sentimental ballads in vogue at that day. (Does the reader ask, "and when was 'that day?'"

He must content himself with the information that it was within a year or two of the year 1830.) Mr. Diamond walked to the window, and holding aside the blind, stood looking out at the dark sky.

All at once, when the servant opened the door to go out, there came up from the lower part of the house the sound of singing; slow, long-drawn, rather tuneless singing of a few voices, male and female.

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Errington, "Oh dear me, Sarah, how is this?"

Algernon made a comical face of disgust, and put his hands to his ears.

"It be as Mr. Powell's ha' come back, mum," said Sarah, with much gravity.

"Really! Really!" said Mrs. Errington, in the tone of one protesting against an utterly unjustifiable offence.

"Come back! Where has he been?" asked Algernon, carelessly.

"On 'is rounds, please sir."

"I do wish Mr. Powell would choose some other time for his performances!" cried Mrs. Errington, when the servant had left the room. "Now Thursday—on Thursday, for instance, we are going to a whist party, at the Bodkins', and then he might squall out his psalms, and shout, and rave, without annoying anybody."

"He'd only annoy the neighbours," said Algernon, "and that wouldn't matter!"

He was smiling with a sort of contemptuous amusement, and touching random notes here and there on the harpsichord with one finger.

"There will be no getting Rhoda upstairs to-night," said Mrs. Errington. "Poor little thing! she's in for a whole evening of psalm-singing."

Algernon rose from the instrument with a clouded brow. His face wore the petulant look of a spoiled child, whose will has been unexpectedly crossed.

"Deuce take Mr. Powell, and all Welsh Methodists like him!" said he.

"My dear Algy! No, no; I cannot approve of that, though Mr. Powell is a Dissenter. Besides, such language in my presence is not respectful."

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said Algernon, laughing. And with the laughter, the cloud cleared from his brow. Clouds never rested there long.

"Will you have a game of cribbage with me, Mr. Diamond? This naughty boy will scarcely ever play with me. Or, if you prefer it, dummy whist —?"

"No whist for me," interposed Algernon,

decisively. "It is such a botheration. And I play so atrociously that it would be cruel to ask Mr. Diamond to sit down with me."

With that he returned to the harpsichord, and began singing softly to himself in snatches.

"Cribbage then?" said Mrs. Errington in her mellow, measured tones.

Mr. Diamond let fall the blind from his hand so roughly, that the wooden roller rattled against the wainscot, and advanced to the table where Mrs. Errington was already setting forth the cards and cribbage-board. He sat down without a word, cut the cards as she directed, shuffled, dealt, and played in a moody sort of silent manner; which, however, did not affect Mrs. Errington's nerves at all.

Meanwhile, there went on beneath Algernon's love-songs, and the few utterances of the players which the game necessitated, a kind of accompanying bourdon of voices from down-stairs. Sometimes one single voice would rise in passionate tones, almost as if in wrath. Then came singing again, which, softened by distance, had a wild, wailing character of ineffable melancholy. Algernon paused in his fitful playing and singing, as though unwilling to be in dissonance with those long-drawn sounds. Mrs. Errington calmly continued to exclaim, "Fifteen six," and "two for his heels," without regard to anything but her game.

When the rubber was at an end, Mr. Diamond rose to take his leave.

He lingered a little in doing so. He lingered in taking up his hat, and in buttoning his coat across his breast.

"Have you not anything warmer to put on?" said Mrs. Errington. "Dear me, it is very wrong to go out of this snug room into the air—and the wind has got up, too!—with no more wrap than you have been sitting in, here by the fire! Algy, lend him your great-coat."

"Thank you, no. Good night," said the tutor, and walked off without further ceremony.

He still lingered, however, in descending the stairs; and yet more in passing the door of a parlour, whence came a murmur of voices. Finally, he let himself out at the street-door, and encountering a bleak gust of wind, set off down the silent street at a round pace.

"What a fool you are, Matthew!" was his mental ejaculation, as he strode along with his head bent down, and his gloveless hands plunged deep into his pockets.

FORMOSA AND THE JAPANESE.

IN 1683, the island of Formosa fell under the power of the Pekin government. There is not much to tell about its previous history. According to some Chinese MSS. preserved at Macao, it was not discovered by the Chinese till 1480; though, fond as junks are known to be of hugging the coast, we can hardly believe that for ages upon ages they could have failed to find a big island, not much further from the mainland than Brindisi is from the opposite coast of Greece, not so far as Dublin is from Holyhead. Of what the Chinese did there while they had it to themselves, we know little or nothing. They did not teach the natives much; for the poor creatures knew very little indeed when Europeans came among them. No doubt they fished as usual for sea-slug, and gathered edible birds' nests; and they had found out that the camphor-wood of the island is finer than any in China, and had begun to cut it down pretty largely.

In 1524, or thereabouts, the Portuguese sighted a big island, with high mountains, and with such lovely peeps of wooded glen, and sweet grassy valley, that they called it Formosa, the beautiful. After the Portuguese came the Spanish; and then, in 1624, the Dutch founded a factory on the north coast; built a fort—Fort Zealand (the huge tamarind-tree, which is the only landmark to the wretched harbour of Taiwan-fou, is still called Zealandia); and thought themselves so secure in their position that they started missions to the aborigines, and translated parts of the Bible into Formosan. It is a sad thing for the natives that some European power did not continue to hold the island. Any one of the three who settled there would have been better than the Chinese, who have done nothing for the aborigines but gradually improve them off the face of the earth. If I were tutelary deity of Formosa, and had been given my choice, I should have preferred the Spaniards. Their own country is not a picture of good government; but they seem to have the gift of improving subject races, instead of exterminating them. Not far south of Formosa, in the Philippines, they have done a really good work. The Tagal aborigines are as contented a set as any in the world: the Spaniards have taught them to work and to like work, and have trained their musical capacity till they

have become a nation of concert givers. Indeed, on the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" principle, we must pronounce the Philippines to be a success; and, had the semi-religious settlement which the Spaniards made in Formosa flourished, I see no reason why Formosa should not have become another Luzon. The Formosans are of the same race as the Tagals, black-toothed betel-chewers, not at all akin to the Chinese, nor yet wholly Malay. They are not a bad people; though, of course, it was needful to get up a cry against them to justify the Japanese invasion. Charles Gutzlaff, the missionary, gives them a character which would suit most "natives"—"harmless when not provoked."

That Mantchu-Tartar conquest, which gave China its present rulers, drove the Dutch out of Formosa. Beaten on the mainland, a great number of Chinese (twenty-five thousand, say the records) went across to Formosa. Perhaps the Chinese expected that the Tartars would disappear as quickly as they had come; at any rate, they thought Formosa a handy place from which to watch events. So they gave notice to the Dutch—"We want our island, and you must go, if you please." For a while there was room for both; for one Nicholas (an odd name for a Chinaman), a man baptised and brought up at Macao, who had grown to be the richest merchant on Formosa, took the command of the refugees, fitted out a fleet against the Tartars, and swept the coast from Amoy northward. At last he was enticed to Peking, and his son Koshinga was driven off from the Chinese seaboard, and forced to take refuge on the island. He then plainly told the Dutch that they must decamp; but Governor Coyet did not see it at all. He sent to Batavia, and brought up the Dutch fleet; on the coming of which Koshinga seemed so mild and peaceable that the admiral made up his mind that Coyet had been frightening himself about nothing, and that he and his guns were not at all wanted. So the fleet sailed off, and the Chinese at once began their attack. They carried one fort, and then the town was abandoned to them; but Fort Zeeland they could not take. The Dutch had fifteen hundred men, the enemy as many thousands; but, whenever they came on, the only result was that the streets were heaped with Chinese dead, and the fort held out as before. The Chinese attack

had been so sudden that they had taken a great many prisoners—missionaries and others; and now, through them, they tried to force a surrender. One of these men, the story tells, behaved like the Roman Regulus; he had lived for years on the island, and Koshinga trusted a great deal to his influence with the governor, and offered him great rewards if he could bring about a capitulation, threatening him at the same time with fearful punishment if he did not succeed. The missionary went, and strongly advised his countrymen to hold out and to send again to Batavia for help. Noticing the anger of the Chinese envoys who accompanied him, Coyet begged him to stay in the fort. "No, I'll be as good as my word," he said, and went back, and was tortured to death in sight of his countrymen. Instead of sending to Batavia, Coyet seems to have sought help from the Tartars at Peking. The only narrative I can find of the matter is from a Russian source, and is not very clear. Anyhow, a breach was at last made in the walls of Fort Zeeland, and Coyet agreed to evacuate the island.

This was in 1662. Eight years later, our East India Company, which spent a good deal of time and energy in feeling about among these distant places, before it settled in good earnest to the work of which our great Indian Empire is the result, began to have dealings with the king of Taywan, as they called Koshinga (Taiwan being the Chinese name of the island). They got leave to set up a factory, on condition "that we may sell or truck our goods with whom we please, and likewise that all may have the same free trade with us; that upon all occasions we may have access to the king's person, and that he shall right us in all wrongs; that all exports be free, and that whatever the king imports shall pay no custom;" but there is the important addition that all ships which put into port shall give up their guns and ammunition till they sail again. Formosa, on these terms, didn't pay. There was little trade, and the fair-seeming conditions turned out vexatious. In 1681 the Company gave up its factory, and two years after the Mantchus conquered the island, and annexed it to the government of Tokien, of which Amoy is the capital.

From the time the Company left it, the history of Formosa is a blank. The aborigines have mostly been gradually pushed south and east, across the great range of volcanic mountains which cuts the island

in two; of course some of them have been tamed by the Chinese, and a good many of the latter have run wild, burst away from etiquette, and mandarins, and his excellency the deputy at Taiwan-fou, and taken to the mountains. Even Chinamen sometimes get restless. When they do so at home, as a rule they turn pirates; but as Formosa is a poor place for pirates—for two hundred miles at a stretch there is no port of any kind—a lawless Chinaman, in Formosa, takes not to the sea, but, like Robin Hood, to the good green wood; and very good the greenwood is, as soon as you have passed the foggy, marshy plains, rich with volcanic detritus, where some of the finest rice in the world is grown, and whence sugar is largely exported to China. The coast is far less interesting; it is mostly fringed with low sand hills, and at low water the tide runs out a great way, leaving a broad beach, covered with innumerable little lemon-coloured crabs. As regularly as the tide goes out, down come the monkeys (the island swarms with them) and go crab-hunting; but to look on at this becomes wearisome after a time, and, as there is no other kind of fun going, a man's only consolation is that the coast is wonderfully healthy. During the wet season, when it rains every day, as it can only rain in the tropics, up in the hills, there is seldom a drop on the coast. Of course there is a typhoon now and then; the Tropic of Cancer cuts across the lower end of the island, so it is just in the zone for typhoons; and then trees are torn up, houses blown down, and you hear the bamboo canes in the forest grinding against each other, with a roar like that of a hundred organs. In 1782, the whole island was devastated by a fearful hurricane.

Excepting the monkeys, there are very few *feræ naturæ*—none in fact, except the stag, the wild buffalo, and the ubiquitous wild pig. It is the same on the Philippines; whereas on the Chinese mainland there are tigers and such like—a proof, they say, that Formosa was not broken off from China, but possibly once joined to Luzon, the Bashee and other groups of islets remaining as “survivals” of the junction. If monkeys abound on land (so much so that one of the chief peaks is called Mount Ape) alligators are equally numerous in the water. They swarm so that it is seldom safe to cross a river in a light boat, or on a pony—for the island boasts a few Chinese ponies, imported for

the use of luxurious Europeans or fat mandarins.

Then, the underground wealth matches the beauty of the surface. There are mines of gold and copper; and coal is already largely worked. Petroleum, too, “the fuel of the future,” is found here as in most other places; and there are the virgin forests, which will soon get ruined (as they have been nearly all the world over) when civilised man plants himself firmly in the country.

Such is Formosa. Its aborigines, “harmless when not provoked,” are fine specimens of humanity. The weaklings die off, and the survivors are wonderfully well shaped, and so strong that, if they escape the chances of savage life, they are out hunting or fighting at three score years and ten, as keenly as if they were barely out of their teens. Everybody goes armed; the ploughman and shepherd have their bows ready, just as the Jews had when they were building their city wall. Besides bows and arrows, they have very broad swords, and a few old Chinese matchlocks, which they never use without a “rest” to take aim from. When provoked they have an ugly trick of waiting for you at a corner, and cutting you down as you pass. Still, missionaries do not despair of them; the old Spanish work still lingers on, and the English and Americans are at it—the former (their enemies say) combining a profitable trade, in East India opium and Manchester goods, with the preaching of the Gospel, much as in Tonga and elsewhere they manage to make a very good penny out of arrow-root.

Unattractive as the natives are, the island is coveted by more than one European power. Three years ago, the Germans offered the Chinese government five million dollars for it. There was no indemnity to pay just then; so China refused. But after the next opium, or treaty-port, or missionary war, the emperor may, perhaps, be compelled to sell. Quite lately Italy has been trying, in a humbler way, to plant a factory; but, hitherto, with little success. Last year, however, Formosa was a great deal in the newspapers; every mail brought news of the expected rupture between China and Japan; and all because a few Japanese fishermen had been massacred by the aborigines, on the south-east of Formosa. Japan conveniently forgot that, not many years ago, it was her custom also to kill those unlucky enough to be ship-

wrecked on her shores; nay, moreover, to kill any Japanese, who, having been cast away on any foreign land, should afterwards get back to his native country. But Japan is now civilised—she has railways, telegraphs, an army dressed up in European clothes, and, above all, a national debt. No wonder she felt aggrieved at the barbarism of the Formosans.

Why they should have become so barbarous all of a sudden is a mystery; for, eight years ago, an American (Legendre, Consul at Amoy) took occasion, from the massacre of the crew of the *Rover*, to go over to Formosa, "interview" several chiefs—notably the great Tok-e tok—and make a compact, whereby all shipwrecked folks should be held to ransom, instead of being killed. It was a bold thing to do; and for some time it was successful. A notable instance of this occurred in 1871, when a junk belonging to an English company put in to cut wood. After getting a load, it was caught in a typhoon and swamped, with the loss of seventeen out of a crew of thirty-five. The eighteen survivors were not killed, but shut up in a shed, and word was passed on across the island to Mr. Pickering, the agent at Taiwan-fou. He at once sent two Englishmen southward to enquire into the truth of the matter; and the journey (in great part on foot) of Mr. Hughes and his friend is, in its way, as noteworthy as that of the Forrests across Western Australia. From the natives they met with no hindrance; once only a Boutan (the Boutans are the wildest tribe, in the extreme south-east), probably drunk with bhang or opium, drew his big sword, and began to dance round them, foaming at the mouth, rolling his eyes, and looking in general as if he was going to "run a-muck." But just as they were getting frightened, one rushed the man's wife, tall and comely like most of the Boutan women, wrenched the sword out of her husband's hand, and drove him, with much scolding, into his hut. Next day the poor fellow came and humbly begged pardon, offering a practical illustration of the way in which women's rights are respected in lat. 23° N. long. 121° E. Arrived at Tok-e-tok's village, they found that chief out hunting, but were hospitably received by his wives, who gave them venison cooked in half-a-dozen ways, fresh pork, delicious rice, and the alternative between splendidly pure water and shamson (sweet-potato spirit). Of course two white men at dinner brought

the whole village to look on; but, though the lattice-work hut, which was Tok-e-tok's palace, was beset with eager eyes, not a soul incommoded them. If any one was pushed in by the press outside, a look from the ladies sufficed to send him out utterly ashamed of himself. On the whole the story reminds us of the old prints of the French king dining in public, with the eager Parisians watching the while; though, probably, the Parisians were more pushing than the Boutans. Even now-a-days we, in England, know something of this crowding to see distinguished personages eat.

Very early next day the chief came back, and at once arranged an open-air conference, which was inaugurated by an old woman stepping into the midst of the assemblage, and chanting an invocation to peace and goodwill. It was arranged that the eighteen should be sent to Taiwan-fou as soon as the ransom, according to tariff, had been paid. The delight of these poor creatures, who thought they were being kept to be eaten, may well be imagined, and Mr. Hughes was anxious to return with all speed and send the money. But Tok-e-Tok insisted on their staying to a great feast; and they, judging (a little harshly, to my thinking) that they were on ticklish ground, and that it only needed two or three glasses of shamson to turn their kind hosts into furious madmen, thought it best to yield. They were not kept long waiting. A hundred hunters sallied out at once, and returned in a few hours loaded with deer, boars, and small game; these were skinned, and the feast began as quickly as the feasts described in Homer or Virgil. What astonished the white men was that while everybody else had a layer of banana leaves for plates, for them were set plate, knife, fork—all complete. Sheffield and Birmingham and Stoke-upon-Trent had managed to get their goods right into the wildest part of Formosa, as, indeed, they somehow manage to get them everywhere. The feast over, the warden-begone, and then (by way of ballet) a wonderful imitation of a cock-fight; and at last, by moonlight, the whole tribe escorted the two whites to their boundary, and, in their fashion, bade them good speed. In due time the eighteen were safely handed over to Mr. Pickering.

If this is a fair sample of Boutan procedure, it is hard to understand how they could so far have forgotten themselves as to have killed, in 1873, fifty Japanese subjects. I believe there must be some

mistake in the numbers; though Japanese practice and the memories of our own wreckers make ugly stories of that kind credible enough. But the Japanese wanted a war to keep their army in good humour. It is not everybody in Japan who likes the wholesale changes, which have stripped the daimios of their hereditary privileges, forced rich and poor to alter their style of dress, broken up the priesthood—in fact, done more, in six years, than has been done in Europe in as many centuries. Railways and telegraphs and iron-clads and paper-money are all good in their way, though Japanese Tories may well sigh for the good old days when the export of gold was forbidden; but the Samourai (military dependents of the chiefs) are a large class, suddenly thrown out of the means of life, and deprived of social consideration. They had been restless for some time; and two years ago a revolt broke out in Kinsin, the cry being, "War with Corea; death to the Jo-i (strangers); restoration of feudalism." Only by great efforts were the insurgents, who had burnt a castle and beaten a detachment of the Mikado's troops, crushed, before the revolt had spread over the whole group of islands. Just then the Japanese envoy, who in 1873 managed, along with the European envoys, to get himself presented to the Chinese emperor, returned. He had brought the Formosan outrages very strongly before the Pekin government; but Prince Kung's answer had been: "non possumus—we are powerless, unhappily, in South Formosa." The Japanese were naturally angry; Legendre, who had gone back with them from Pekin to Jeddo, and who in 1871 had been surveying on the Formosan coast, offered maps and charts; and, since the alternative seemed to lie between a foreign war and disaffection at home, the cry was, "If China cannot or will not right us, we must right ourselves."

There was not much danger, except from typhoons; for the fighting men of the eighteen independent Formosan tribes do not number altogether more than two thousand five hundred, and those whom the Japanese despatches characterised as "bad" they only estimated at six hundred. Still there was this risk; the Formosan expedition might lead to a war with China, and in such a war defeat would have been ruinous—would have thrown Japan back some centuries at least, and would have brought into the field Russia or Germany,

who are eagerly watching to force themselves in as allies.

The expedition was, like all such affairs, when undertaken by a trader-ridden country like Japan, ten times as costly as it ought to have been; a whole swarm of white jobbers and traders had something or other to get off their hands, which was, of course, bought at the seller's price. Last May it sailed—three thousand five hundred men, in three war steamers, a gunboat, and an armed sloop, besides a transport full of mechanics, with frames, &c., to build houses for a little colony. Three Boutan villages were soon ablaze; and there was a battle up a valley, in which the Japanese lost twelve killed and wounded. They killed the chief and his son, known by their silver finger-rings, and so terrified the other tribes that they came in to make submission, bringing dried fish and firewood. In July the grand battle took place. The heights were stormed; the Boutans fired their matchlocks under cover of their leaf-thatched huts, but they were beaten out, and what became of the survivors nobody knows. If they did not succeed in gaining the mountains they were probably cut to pieces by the other tribes. And so Japan took full rank as a civilised state by exterminating a tribe of barbarians. It is a little unpleasant to learn that the Japanese cut off and carried away the heads of their dead enemies; but then they have only had, at most, ten years of European culture.

Then followed a great peace-making. The Japanese general distributed flags to all the tribes who had made submission, and gave them champagne, which so touched their hearts, that they burst into tears, cursed the Boutans, and swore eternal friendship to the Mikado.

All this time the Chinese had made no sign; Japanese energy seemed to have paralyzed them; but now that everything was over, the taotai (governor) posted up a proclamation in Taiwan-fou, telling the people that "the Japanese came to punish the murderous Boutans. They have punished them; but, as they seem inclined to prolong their stay, the Chinese Emperor tells me he has sent two high officers to order them to go. The Boutans were to blame; but it was our business to deal with them. Meanwhile, the emperor bids all the tribes to put aside their arms, and go on with their usual work; he will settle matters with Japan." In this way the Chinese avoided a war—by delaying all in-

terference until the Japanese had done everything that they had the slightest excuse for doing. Saigo, the Japanese general, of course, declined to give way to the two commissioners: "we are here; and we shall hold a fort for the protection of our shipwrecked people." "But you mustn't stay," said the Chinese; and at last, after much diplomacy and many fierce messages, Japan caved in for the present, and Formosa is no longer a *casus belli*.

But what has happened is enough to make us thoughtful for the future. A hostile encounter between China and Japan, with their huge armies and growing steam fleets, could not fail to have its effect on India; and India touched, means England alarmed. So even the little-known island of Formosa may at any time be the cause of trouble here in the west.

MARIGOLD.

A ROMANCE IN AN OLD GARDEN.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Marigold arrived at Hildebrand Towers, she found Poll Hackett sitting in an arm-chair, by her fireside, wrapped up in flannels, and unable to move any member except her tongue. All her thoughts were occupied with ringing the changes upon one idea; whether or not the news could be true, that the master of Hildebrand Towers had been found at last. Sometimes, she was perfectly sure there was not a doubt of the fact, and lamented bitterly the accident of her own state of temporary helplessness.

"To think of me sittin' here like a mummy, or a cripple, for the master to walk in upon, as if I had been takin' my money for nothin' but a shelter to my own poor bones, all these years. Me, that was always on the trot, in an' out, up an' down, expectin' an' expectin', and preparin' to that degree, that I declare my mind's a'most wore out wid the dint of the perpetual preparation. 'Never you leave off bein' ready,' said the ould mistress to me afore she died, and I never did, as Peter Lally can witness to you. All the coals that has been burned to death in them rooms for nothin'! All the chickens that has been fattened, over an' over again, runnin' up to my feet an' askin' to be killed for the master's dinner! An now to think of him waitin' till I'm pinned to my chair like a good-for-nothing. An' comin' walkin' in disgusted because everything's at sixes and sevens!"

"But they're not at sixes and sevens!" Marigold would cry. "The fires are blazing beautifully, all through the upper rooms; there isn't a speck of dust anywhere, for I've just been all round with a duster. I've even got in some scarlet berries off the old garden wall, to mix with the ivy in the big vases, in the drawing-room. There's provision for a good dinner in the larder, and six pairs of sheets aired as dry as can be. I don't know anything about the place that isn't as it should be, except one little hole in the carpet, on the stair that goes up to the attics, and I mean to darn it directly. So make your mind easy, Poll Hackett, and let me give you a good rubbing with this liniment!"

But the next day Poll had a new cause for uneasiness.

"Nonsense, child!" she said to Marigold. "Stop wastin' your trouble all for nothing. There's no more a master comin' here nor you're goin' to Australia, only wicked talk of mischievous people to throw me into a fever, and me with the rheumatism. Go out an' tell Peter Lally not to be makin' a fool of himself, dreamin' over triumphant arches, for I seen them in his eye last night, an' him talkin' to me; and then come back an' settle down here wid your sewin' or something!"

And Marigold, glad to get away awhile, put on her cloak, and went out along the damp gravel paths, by the trim lawns, and ancient gardens, to the ivied corner where stood Peter Lally's dwelling, in the angle of two peach-tree-covered walls. As she went along, two or three of Poll's fretful words rang in her ears, with a perplexing pertinacity. "No more nor you are going to Australia," said a voice in her ear; and answered itself again, "Perhaps you are going to Australia!"

Peter Lally was sitting in his cottage, with his chair drawn to the hearth, and his pipe lying unlighted on the hob beside him. His eyes were fixed absently on a smouldering piece of wood in the grate, and there was a general look about him, which suggested that something unusual had occurred. Peter was in noway a chilly kind of man, and not given to sitting by his fireside in the middle of the day.

"Oh, aye!" said Peter to Marigold. "She's on the turn now. Poll takes a try at every opinion under the sun, an' of coorse she must happen on the right one sometimes. She's not hit on it now, how-

somdever. We must give her another day or two to be round at the truth."

"What is the truth, then, Peter?" said Marigold; "for this was truth with you only yesterday."

"But twenty-four hours has gone by since then, my girl; and there's many a thing knocked down or put on its feet in as many seconds. There's a message come in to me an hour ago, an' it has took the breath out o' me, somehow; so that I cannot do fair by my dixonary words. I'll be able to talk to you this evening, little Marigold. When the lawyer gentleman arrives, I'll have my wits got ready."

"What do you mean, Peter?" said Marigold. "You don't want me to keep puzzling at a riddle until evening?"

"The master's found!" said Peter, lifting his gray head, and gazing at the girl, half in triumph, and half in blind amazement at his own statement. "The lawyer 'll be here to-night, to bid us what to do! Go off, now, and talk your women-talk over it; for Peter's too dumbfounded to make head or tail out o' it yet!"

That evening the lawyer from London arrived: a gentleman who had for many years paid occasional visits to the Towers, to collect rents on the estate, and to see that the place was kept in order. He was all the master whom Poll and Peter knew.

This time, however, he came to make arrangements for the arrival of the long-looked-for owner of Hildebrand Towers. Being a person of few words, he had little to say, after all, when he summoned Peter into his presence.

"Your new master is a fine young man," he said, nodding pleasantly at Peter; "one you need not be afraid of. It's a curious story, is his; you will hear it all, no doubt, by-and-by. He might have been here before now, only he has been ill of a fever. He had a good deal of anxiety about making good his claim, and that, very probably, knocked him up. Well, you will remember my instructions as usual. I have to go ten miles further to-night; so must waste no more time."

And away he went, leaving Peter, Poll, and Marigold very little wiser than when he came. One thing only they knew for certain; that, on a particular day, the master of Hildebrand Towers would dine in the old dining-room—at the board whereat his ancestors had eaten and drunk. It was his wish to come quietly and alone into the place, and to make hereafter such changes as might seem to him suitable.

"Rub me well!" cried Poll Hackett to Marigold; "Rub, as you never rubbed in your life before; for I must be about, to receive the new master! Things is comin' out just as I always knew they would, only nobody would believe me. I knew I'd be caught this ways; only I won't, if the Lord gives me life. I'll be up and goin' about, and get my credit for all I've done these years. There'll still be a house-keeper wantin', let him be what he likes; an' I'm not to be thrust out as old rubbish an' another put into my shoes. Now, Marigold, dear," she went on, "I want you to stick to me; and don't let me have to be sending for help into the town for the sake of a gentleman's dinner. There's them would be glad to come out and fill up the kitchen, and curtsey in the hall in white caps and aprons, an' take my credit away from me, and put in for my place. But, if you stick to me now, I'll tide over the time, an' be ready for my work again."

"Don't be uneasy," said Marigold; "we'll have nobody from the town. You'll show me how to cook the dinner, and I know how a table should be arranged. I'll serve him—I'd as soon do one thing as another—and I'll try and make you well enough to have all the curtseying in the hall to yourself."

Marigold, having thus pledged herself, went about making her last effort at being useful to those who had been good to her. She took her way up and down through the old chambers and passages of the house, seeing that everything was well-ordered, placing old-fashioned articles of furniture in their best aspect, brightening and garnishing a little here and there, so that the house might appear well cared for, and Poll Hackett's precious "credit" should not suffer. In the long, faded, antique drawing-room she placed branches of hot-house flowers in the great china vases on the mantelpieces, saying to herself, "it is the last time I shall work among Peter's flowers." In the dim ghostly mirrors she saw her own solitary figure and the glow of the fire, and the blush and freshness of the flowers, making a wonderful patch of life and warmth in the middle of the lack-lustre, moth-tinted room. She remembered the evening when she had dressed like a lady to amuse Poll Hackett, and had danced about here; "a poor, foolish, light-headed thing!" she said now, looking around her. And then she recollected how much happiness was

included in the folly of that day—how Ulick had come to meet her among the trees, and how they had talked, and she had believed. With that day had set the glory of the summer of her life!

It was wonderful how all the old reception-rooms warmed up under the bloom of her decorations. This was her last piece of work, and she would do it well, she thought; and went out to Peter Lally for more flowers to weave into it. It was a day of pale gleams and weeping rains, that made the thickets blacker, and bare branches seem more naked as they shivered against the sky. Marigold traversed the wet paths towards the gardens, and, following a wayward impulse, quitted them to cross the long swards and to reach the mossy place enclosed by trees where stood the sun-dial. Here she and Ulick had lingered on that summer evening which seemed so long ago; then the rose-thickets near had been covered with bloom, the blackbirds sang, the air was full of perfume and the sky of golden clouds. She saw again the burnished foliage and deep purple shadows of the trees, she felt a warm light on her face, and a tender touch upon her hand. Now, what a change! Never again would she see the moving shadow chased by the sun over the grey face of the dial; never pluck the roses, nor listen for the blackbird's note; never feel smile of love on brow or tender touch on hand. Beyond these blackened, blighted trees, beyond that rainy horizon, stretched the mighty restless ocean which had already divided her from her happiness, and was now drawing her spirit away with it, as it ebbed moaning to the most distant side of the world. Farther than he had gone she would go; those strong, wandering, resistless waves should take her in their arms, either to carry her into eternity, or into some new existence of action yet unshaped and undreamed. In the sighing of the rain, in the raving of the wind through the trees, she heard only its hoarse urgent voice calling her away.

Peter Lally was busy arranging the shelves of his greenhouses when Marigold came to him praying for more flowers.

"I'll give you plenty," he said, "only you must leave me enough to look handsome here myself. The master will expect me to look beautiful; oh, then, if I had only all the flowers round about me that I reared and buried since I've been waiting for him! There, I've smashed a pot! my hands are shakin', and I feel all someway

taken up by the roots. I don't know what's going to happen next, the times is so quare. When a thing you've been expectin' for a lifetime comes an' stares you in the face of a sudden, it seems as if it ought to be a sort of finishing off to you some way or another. Howsomdever I'll be here to the fore in the spring, my girl; it'll take more frosts nor one to kill me out; an' I'll have a pretty little lot of plants for you to begin your work with."

"I won't want them, Peter," said Marigold; "I'm going away. I'm going to Australia".

"Australia! You!" cried Peter. "No, no, Marigold; don't be lettin' such thoughts come into your head. You've had hard times upon you; but you're not going to be astray on the world, for the sake o' them that isn't as honest as yourself. I was thinkin' that when the new times is come you'd fall into somethin' nice about the place, an' might work your way up to be a lady, as you've the right to be. As long as Peter's alive you won't want for one to be a father to you; but you'd be lonesome crossin' the say, my girl!"

"It's here that I'm lonesome, Peter," said Marigold. "It's only because of the winter-time, and the coldness and barrenness of everything that I can get on with it at all. I couldn't wait here to see another spring coming over the world. The summer-look of everything would take the last drop of blood out of my heart; and I have my life to live, and I'll need all my strength. I've no place here any more; in another world I'll make room for myself. I've done with flowers—I'll never meet another one like you—; but I must go my way, all the same."

She turned her back upon him with a dry sob, picked up her flowers, and went out of the greenhouse.

The day arrived, which was to bring a master to take possession of Hildebrand Towers. The rain had cleared away; a yellow lake had welled up among the grey wastes of the clouds; the old rooks plumed themselves on the ivy, and made mysterious comment upon certain events which the day was to bring forth. Poll Hackett, with the help of liniment and a determined will, was hobbling about in her best attire, and had been practising curtseys all the morning. Snow-white napery, a hundred years old, which had been used to see the light only on occasion of being aired and bleached, now clothed the old mahogany of the dining-room; glass and china

twinkled, and silver shone; flowers bloomed in moss in the centre of the table; the firelight flashed over the astonishment and satisfaction of the assembled company of Hildebrands on the walls, who looked down on the preparations for their long-missing and long-expected descendant. At dusk, Marigold looked out of one of the deep, beetle-browed windows, and saw how, in place of the yellow lake, a fire now seemed kindled in the heavens, against which the trees were outspread, as if for warmth. She listened for wheels, closed the shutters, lighted the candles, and returned to the kitchen, to move the roasting pullets a little further from the fire.

"He's past his hour," said Peter Lally, who sat at the fire in a state of feverish expectation, "He's not one of the punctual sort; that's all we know about him, yet."

"Whisht!" cried Poll. "Didn't you hear a door clappin' up-stairs? I feel as if there was something walkin' about the house. I wish he would come."

Suddenly the door-bell rang out, sharp and clear.

"It's him!" cried Poll, fluttering hysterically.

"God bid him welcome!" said Peter, rising solemnly.

"It's only the back gate bell," said Marigold, quietly. "A beggar, or a messenger. I'll see who it is."

Poll and Peter sank back into their seats.

"She has her wits about her," said Peter, rubbing his forehead in a bewildered way. "It's well there's somebody brisk."

Marigold took a lantern, and disappeared down a long dark passage, and the others were again intent upon listening. All at once an extraordinary cry rang up out of the depths of the darkness into which Marigold had passed; and then there was silence again.

"She's murdered!" shrieked Poll. "I knew there was something quare in the house!"

"Tut, woman!" said Peter, and seizing the poker, he trotted down the passage.

Mrs. Hackett's fears seemed, for a moment, reasonable to Peter, when he saw on before him, at the end of the passage, an open door, the lantern on the ground, the dark figure of a man within the threshold, and Marigold drooping over the arm of the stranger.

"Oh Peter, oh Peter!" cried Ulick's voice, "I have come too suddenly; I have killed her."

"You have treated her badly, at all events, young man!" said Peter, sternly.

Marigold lifted her white face, and looked at Peter. "Bring him in," she said. "He is wet and cold."

"Now, Poll, woman, quit your skirlin'!" said Peter, as the three entered the warm and fragrant kitchen. "My word for it, there's nobody has time to attend to you! It's these cold hands here that wants a little rubbin' now."

"Don't mind me, Peter," said Marigold. "I've got back my breath again. Sorrow did not kill me, and joy will not kill me neither. Here's a hungry man that wants his supper. The fowls will be spoiled; I'll dish them at once!"

"But the master!" cried Peter.

"He ought to have been in time," said Marigold. "That is if he wanted three times more dinner than he could eat."

"You look pale and thin; have you been ill?" said Peter, softening towards Ulick, as he looked in his face.

"I have been very near death; else you should never have had to reproach me," said Ulick. "I have a long story to tell; but there is plenty of time for it."

"The enemies were stronger than you expected, perhaps?" said Marigold.

"Yes, but their power is over," said Ulick. "I told you I should come back if I overcame them."

"Oh, do tell us all about it!" cried Poll.

"Let him rest a little, first," said Marigold, seeing something in Ulick's face which she did not quite understand; and then Ulick held her hand tighter than before, and began to pour out stories of his experience of travel, telling of London shops, and London streets, and of fellow-travellers by ship and by coach. So the time passed; the candles were burning away in the dining-room; the carefully-cooked dinner was spoiled and overlooked. Poll forgot her rheumatism, and Peter his feverish expectation of the descendant of the Hildebrands.

"Good heavens!" cried the old man at last. "We have quite forgotten about the master!"

All four looked startled at the words. Ulick trembled strangely, and gazed anxiously in Marigold's face.

"Ulick can tell us about him, Peter," said Marigold. "Ulick knows something. Do you not?"

"Yes," said Ulick, gravely.

"What? Is he alive? Will he be here soon?"

"He is alive. He is here. I am the master."

The silence of bewildered amazement fell on the three hearers of these strange words. They had not heard aright; they could not take it in; they were stunned.

"Has no one a word for me? Am I to get no welcome?"

"You, Ulick!" stammered Peter Lally.

"I, Ulick, am also Godfrey Hildebrand," said the young man. "I did not know it till that news came which took me away to England; and even then I could not tell whether or not I should be able to prove the truth. It was the interest of others more powerful to ignore my claim, to make me appear an impostor. By degrees I shall be able to tell you how much they have made me suffer; how my silence, my illness, were all the effect of their unscrupulous attempts to put me down. In the meantime, I want a welcome to my home."

Peter Lally got up, trembling, and pulling his grey forelock, looked out of watering eyes in the young man's agitated face. Poll Hackett, having shrieked three times, made desperate attempts to come down out of her chair and perform a curtsey.

"Heaven bless my master!" said Peter.

"Excuse me sir, I do not rightly feel it real yet. But Heaven bless my master, that I have lived to see!"

"Thank you, Peter," said the new Hildebrand, shaking his old friend's hand. "Please God, good times are before us all! Marigold, sweet soul, don't cry so. It is strange to see tears from you now, after all you have borne so bravely!"

"Oh, Ulick, I am not fit to be a lady!" whispered Marigold, who was sobbing on his shoulder.

"Are you not?" said Ulick, proudly. "The world shall judge of that by-and-by."

SILVERTOWN.

On the edge of a marsh, in the dubious region between half fluid land and almost solid water, is the thriving colony of Silvertown. Overhead a brumous sky, underfoot artificial "terra" made "firma" by innumerable piles. Across the river, Woolwich, cheered by the presence of "the military." Near at hand, useful but odorous gasworks, the gardens ruled by the Napoleon of caterers, a shabby railway station, and a pretty church. Not an old ivy-grown edifice this last, but a brand new, spick and span, smart and trim modern building rejoicing in its youth—proud of

having been born yesterday. Out of a chaos of mud and slime have sprung neat lines of cottages, a grim hostelry clept "The Railway Hotel," huge wharves, and the seven acres of now solid ground which form the cause and explanation of the whole curious development. On these seven acres are closely packed great buildings, lofty chimneys, and frequent steam engines puffing and snorting in their usual self-asserting manner—bred of the conviction that they cannot be done without, and that their presence, repulsive though it be, must be endured for the sake of their power. There are endless contrivances here, for adapting abundant steam power to the use of man. Broad belts and mighty fly-wheels propel the minor engines, watched keenly by the craftsman's eye, or guided by the workwoman's cunning hand. For the productions of Silvertown are various: india-rubber sheeting, waterproof coats, valves and "washers" of vulcanised "rubber," sponge bags, and those curious portable baths which Englishmen carry with them on their travels, to the amazement of less amphibious races; hard india-rubber, "ebonite," as it is called, in buttons, bottles, cups, and funnels; and last, but not least, ocean cables, and the wonderful telegraphic apparatus for working and testing them. To Silvertown come the "rubber" and "percha" in their crude condition, as purchased from the noble savage; and by their literally internal evidence provoke curious ideas as to the guileless nature of untutored man, uncontaminated by civilisation, uncorrupted by arts and sciences. Our noble friend is doubtless a fine fellow in his way, having decided opinions as to the right of women to do all the work, and entertaining loose ideas on the question of food and property, but worthy of all possible admiration until his faculties are sharpened by the excitement of a "deal." In the long run he is no match for the white, who has been everywhere and done everything, not to say everybody; but occasionally the untutored child of nature proves himself up to his work, by cunningly using a stone, or a piece of heavy wood, as the core of an apparently solid block of india-rubber. Mr. Baily has many of these choice specimens of savage ingenuity on his shelves, and points to them as proofs that the untutored are "kittle cattle to shoe."

From its rough form as block or bottle

"rubber," the juice of the caoutchouc tree undergoes many curious mutations before it becomes a merchantable sheet. In a large building, filled with great iron troughs, and odours far from spicy, many men are at work on the rough rubber, which is first cut into pieces and then partially macerated and washed clean from impurities, emerging at length in the form of long strips of a dirty-white colour, not unlike fragments of unbleached Turkish towelling. It is now ready for the macerating mills, wherein it is worked up with hot water till it assumes the appearance of the chewed india-rubber dear to schoolboys. As the macerator slowly revolves, it squeezes from its capacious jaws a dark-looking viscid mass, only to seize it again and repeat the operation until the material becomes homogeneous, when it is ready for the cylinders. In these it is squeezed, under heavy pressure, through sieves of exceeding fineness, which take up every remaining particle of dirt or grit, and the rubber is now ready to be rolled into thick or thin sheets—or applied to cylinders under which pass miles of silk or cotton cloth, until, after some half dozen applications, a coating of sufficient thickness to make it waterproof has been deposited on the fabric—or to be cast in moulds into valves or buffers. "Washers" and such small deer are cut out of the heavy sheets, which are also employed for making the mats now so much in use. These are produced by a singularly beautiful process applied to sheets of vulcanised caoutchouc. This vulcanising operation is simple enough, consisting merely of the addition of a quantity of sulphur—often combined with colouring matter—to the wet paste of rubber, followed by baking in huge iron ovens filled in with lime. Charged with sulphur the rubber is rolled into long bands, of about half the width of the proposed mats. These bands pass on a travelling bed under a machine furnished with sharp cutters, which inflict stabs at regular distances, and finally cut off the band into lengths. These are next stretched on a frame so as to tear the wounds into almost lozenge-shaped openings, forming a perfect pattern; a process far superior in point of economy to that of punching out the interstices, and thus involving waste of labour and material. Stretched on frames, the mats are now duly baked, and on leaving the oven retain perfectly the form imposed upon them.

To this process of vulcanising, rubber owes much of its adaptability to many uses of modern life. The addition of sulphur, followed by baking in lime, imparts to the material the power of resisting heat, and has extended the area of india-rubber goods to the torrid zone. Carried a step further this process produces ebonite, a material of great hardness and density, of which all kinds of articles, useful and ornamental, may be made: among which may be mentioned the cheap imitations of jet, which have the advantage of being far more durable than the hydro-carbon imitated. An entire district of Silvertown is devoted to the manufacture of waterproof clothing, vulcanised and unvulcanised. Here are stored huge rolls of material coated with rubber, and occasionally, in the case of very fine goods, supplied with an extra layer of fabric concealing the rubber entirely from view. Prettiest among these goods is a light fawn-coloured silk, coated first with rubber, which is then "sandwiched" by the application of checked silk, the result being the material employed for "reversible" coats and cloaks.

In the manufacture of gutta-percha the processes are so similar to those employed for india-rubber, that they hardly merit a separate description. Cleansed, macerated, pressed, and rolled, the "percha" is cut into strips, nearly resembling hides in appearance. The employment, however, of this useful material has been much curtailed by its great increase in price. Only a few years ago there was a cry of "Every Man his own Cobbler," and otherwise sane persons undertook to sole their own boots—an attempt attended with varying success, especially among those who could not be prevented from toasting their toes by the fire. These latter often found the experiment "come off" in a literal and aggravating manner; but the days of amateur boot-soleing concluded with the scarcity of "percha," caused by its profuse employment in the manufacture of telegraph cables. At one time it was proposed to apply "percha" to the arts, and it was shown that successful statuettes could be cast from this plastic material; but experience demonstrated that it perished on exposure to the air, and that work cast in it underwent a gradual process of deterioration.

It is now largely used for coating submarine telegraph wires; its greater strength rendering it preferable for this purpose to rubber, which however does well enough

for terrestrial or aerial lines. The growth of a cable, from a simple copper wire to the robust proportions it ultimately acquires, can be perfectly followed at Silvertown. Around a nucleus of slender copper are twisted six strands of similar wire. This work goes on rapidly, and the heart or working part of the cable is continuously turned out; for in the making of cables there is no break—no solution of continuity. As mile after mile of the seven-fold wire is made, fresh lengths of copper are spliced or rather “brazed” on, and the product is reeled off and passed overhead to undergo further treatment before it becomes a complete “core.” It may here be remarked that the long ocean telegraph cables have only one core, and that attempts to bind several cores in one cable have been definitively abandoned—at least for long distances. The twisted wire now passes away in one enormous length, to be coated with gutta-percha, and to that end is slowly dragged through a box supplied with that material; the quantity taken up being reduced to an uniform thickness by the size of the aperture from which the core emerges. Cooled down until the percha has thoroughly solidified, the core is again and again dressed with coatings of waterproof, and after the third operation becomes a dark-coloured worm of barely half an inch in diameter, consisting of seven strands of wire, and three substantial coats of gutta-percha. At this stage it is stowed in tanks, exposed to various temperatures, and carefully tested at each—an operation of considerable delicacy, in which those scientific electricians, Mr. Gray and Mr. March Webb, take great interest. Approved as a good sound core, it is now ready to receive the coating intended to preserve it from accidents of tension and abrasion, and from the determined incursions of marine animals such as the teredo. To this end it is swathed in jute, and “payed” either with the siliceous compound invented by Mr. Latimer Clark, or with a similar mixture, in which carbon takes the place of silica. The immense buildings devoted to this operation are rope-walks of no common kind. Entering at one end, the simple core, passing through a machine, receives its covering of jute, then, travelling onwards, is “payed” with the material just described; and next, without a break, undergoes one of the prettiest operations in the whole course of its

manufacture. Whirling rapidly round are seven strands of heavy steel wire. Passing through these the prepared core is endowed with armour, heavy, close, and so accurately twisted, that the dreaded teredo may despair of finding a chink in the closely-knit mail. The cable is now a mighty steel-clad serpent, strong enough to encounter the perils of the deep sea, but is deemed worthy of yet more protection, before being consigned to the rocks and waves. Moving ever onward and onward, over the heads of workmen and spectators, our cable-kraken is once more clothed in jute and “payed” with composition, and its glittering armour, now covered by a sable surcoat, is wound off into mighty iron tanks, where it reposes till the ship is ready to carry it to its destination among the lofty hills and dales of the Atlantic basin, or the rugged declivities and gnawing coral reefs of Indian seas. The size of these tanks may be judged from the fact that three hundred miles of cable may be stowed in one of them without half filling it. Huge growsome pits are they, containing many miles of cable, and much pitchy Stygian fluid, of hideous density and noisome odour.

In its complete form a deep-sea cable is about one inch and a half in diameter, and weighs some five or six tons per knot; but these dimensions are greatly increased in the shore ends, which are strengthened till they are as thick as a man's wrist, and their weight nearly doubled. These extreme precautions are rendered necessary, by the probability of accident at the shore ends from ship's anchors, and also by the strain occasioned by steep inclinations and other peculiarities of a rocky shore.

When the enormous weight and length of an ocean cable are taken into consideration, it at once becomes evident that the work of transferring it from the tank ashore, into the tank aboard the ship charged with laying it, is no common task. It is well managed at Silvertown. One of the vessels belonging to the company—for makers of cables generally contract to lay them, and deliver them in working order to the telegraph companies—is moored in the river at a respectful distance. Aerial tackle is fixed, and the lengthy monster, after being subjected to the most delicate tests, is run overhead and coiled in the tanks—arranged in the ship so as to obviate, as much as possible, any undue strain upon a particular part. On the wharf overlooking

the river are storehouses of the material required in laying cables. Here are iron buoys of all sorts, shapes, and sizes, furnished with neat contrivances for holding up cable ends and letting them go when occasion requires; regiments of barrels, employed for floating the heavy ends ashore in shallow water; and little iron testing-houses, made to take to pieces and pack in chests, with every plate carefully numbered, so that they may be put up anywhere in the shortest possible time. In these tiny huts the scientific officers of a cable-laying expedition house themselves and the delicate instruments used for testing and detecting the position of faults in the cable—serious matters, involving much picking up, cutting out, and splicing. Here also is an arsenal of grappels for picking up, powerful machinery for under-running, and ample provision for meeting all the accidents that cables are heir to. The good ship *Dacia*, a veteran at cable-laying, is lying off the works; a stout iron screw steamer. At her stern is the simple machinery required for paying out a cable: a process easy enough in smooth, but not so pleasant in rough weather. The bow of the ship is occupied by a light iron staging, and the machinery for picking up a lost or defective cable—no light business at the best. In fair weather, however, the process of picking up and cutting out a fault, already carefully ascertained, is neat and pretty enough. By the agency of powerful clamps the defective portion is hoisted on board and simply laid across the bows of the ship, until, by continuous testing and careful examination, the fatal spot is fixed upon. Made fast on either side, the cable is now subjected to excision, the sound ends are brought together, perfectly brazed, and spliced; and the cable made whole is once more thrown overboard. During the whole process of cable-laying, which proceeds with the greatest regularity, and without those “kinks” which to the uninitiated would seem inevitable, the scientific corps is constantly at work, testing and testing again the continuity of communication with the shore. The instruments employed are of the most extreme delicacy, and at Silvertown a special department is devoted to their manufacture. Far too dainty for rough work, but invaluable for testing from the shore, is the electrometer invented by Sir William Thompson, of electrical fame. This consists of a needle suspended by a

silken thread, and furnished with a small mirror, which flashes its record upon a scale placed opposite to it. A modified form of this beautiful instrument is now almost universally used for the ordinary purposes of ocean telegraphy. It was found that the older system of printing off dots and dashes involved an expenditure of electrical power highly detrimental to the cables—in fact, burning them up with excessive use. It therefore became an important object to secure some method by which the maximum of work might be achieved by the minimum of electric force; and, thanks to the suspended mirror, messages may be sent for thousands of miles with the force derived from three simple cells. Instead of printing off the dots and dashes of the Morse system, the alphabet only is retained, and the dot is indicated by a slight deflection of the mirror to the left, and the dash by a similar movement to the right. Nothing can be easier than to read off a message in this way, and the saving in wear and tear of a long cable is immense. Many more interesting features are to be found at Silvertown—as truly a product of capital applied to industry as *Saltaire* itself—but a short winter's day is nearly over, a thousand workpeople are forsaking the busy spot, and the visitor must perforce hasten to the train for Fenchurch Street—perhaps the gloomiest and most uncomfortable spot in London on a chilly winter evening.

A SILENT WITNESS.

BY EDMUND YATES.

AUTHOR OF “BLACK SHEEP,” “CASTAWAY,” “THE YELLOW FLAG,” &c. &c.

BOOK II. CHAPTER IX. THE LONDON SEASON.

THE house in Eaton-place had been taken, and a quarter's rent, according to the Indian colonel's invariable demand, paid in advance; Grace and Mrs. Crutchley had inspected it together, and the latter had made certain suggestions as to fittings and furniture absolutely necessary, which were being carried out. In a couple of days' time the heiress would be installed, and Mr. Heath thought it advisable to drive up to Ebury-street, to give the chaperon his final instructions.

He found her in her pretty rooms, which, no matter what might be the time of year, were always gay with blooming flowers, brightly arranged, with a knack and taste which you looked for in vain elsewhere.

Mrs. Crutchley, in her invariable black silk gown, and lace cap, was nestling in a low arm-chair, by the fire—for the sun had gone down, and the mornings and evenings were still chilly—idly cutting the leaves of a green volume of poetry, with a smart gilt paper knife, while the pink shade on a candle by her side gave her complexion a becoming hue.

"Very comfortable indeed," said Mr. Heath, looking round, as he settled himself into his seat, after a cordial greeting. "I am afraid you will find old Colonel Tulwar's house, in Eaton-place, confoundedly rough and wretched after this little paradise."

"It is not a very inspiring mansion, I am bound to confess," said Mrs. Crutchley, with a smile, "but by the additions which I have ordered, it will be rendered habitable; and after all, I am not going to pass my life there. By the way, George, that reminds me of a question I was intending to put to you. What will be the probable duration of my engagement?"

"That, my dear Harriet," said Mr. Heath, slowly stroking his chin, "depends entirely upon circumstances. What makes you anxious to know?"

"Nothing very particular," she replied, undisturbed; "I was merely wondering whether I should endeavour to let these rooms, and if so, for how long—that was all."

"I don't think I would take any steps in the matter," said Heath; "you might get for a tenant a man who would want to smoke in them; or a woman up for the season, with her daughters, who would give musical evenings, and ruin your piano, and break your china, and make the whole place unbearable ever after. I don't think I would let the rooms, if I were you, Harriet."

"Very well," said Mrs. Crutchley, with a shrug of her shoulders, "then I won't attempt it; but you have given me no notion as to how long I shall be required."

"That, my dear Harriet, in a great measure depends upon yourself," said Heath, leaning forward, dropping his careless manner and assuming a business tone; "and it is to give you a few hints that I have come here to-day. Now, from the little you have seen of Miss Middleham, what shall you say about her—is she strong-minded, or feeble, obstinate, or easily led?"

"Your question is put with a purpose, George, and not merely to make society talk?" said Mrs. Crutchley, in the same tone. "I thought so! Well, then, my impression is that Miss Middleham is a

young lady with a will of her own, and with plenty of undeveloped firmness to support her in any resolution which she may make."

"My own view entirely," said Heath, nodding his head. "The will of her own she has, because she has been spoiled, and no one has attempted to cross it. As to undeveloped firmness, that might mean obstinacy, might it not, Harriet?"

"Not in my idea," said Mrs. Crutchley, "unless she were unskilfully treated. Properly handled, Miss Middleham could be led anywhere, and to anything."

"Ex-actly," said Heath, leaning back in his chair, and looking up at the ceiling; "she has what they call a very receptive mind; and if care were taken not to alarm her, might be readily influenced by anyone of superior will. Such as yourself, for instance," he added, looking down at her.

"Yes, such as I," said Mrs. Crutchley, not in the least disconcerted. "I think so."

"You see," pursued Heath, "a girl in her position, heiress to a large fortune, with no father to defend her from the attacks, or even to sift the claims, of those who aspire to her hand, will, naturally, be immensely sought after by men whose sole care for her centres in her money."

"Naturally," said Mrs. Crutchley.

"She, herself, wholly inexperienced, will not be able to comprehend this; her vanity—for most good-looking women are vain—will suggest other reasons for the attention which she receives, but it would be the duty of anyone who has her welfare really at heart, and who had the opportunity of proving it, to point out to her the schemes and machinations of these fortune-hunters, and to prevent her falling a victim to their snares."

"I see," cried Mrs. Crutchley, complacently; "such designing sharpers should, undoubtedly, be exposed. Still, it would be a pity that the girl, on her first entrance into life, should be led to think that the world is entirely peopled by such characters. Under such circumstances, she would, indeed, have but a blank view of existence."

"You are far too clever a woman, Harriet, to start her with any such erroneous ideas," said Mr. Heath. "Life is wicked enough, no doubt; but, in most cases, there is an admixture of good with the evil."

"As I should propose to point out to Miss Middleham," said Mrs. Crutchley. "There will be plenty of specimens of fortune-hunters to show her; for, when we are once established in Eaton-place, and

the amount of her wealth gets known, I can guarantee her having the choice of half the disengaged titles known to Debreton, to say nothing of commoners. Granting even her vanity—and she did not strike me as being very vain—it would not take much argument to prove conclusively to her the motives by which these suitors were influenced; and, while she was in a state of disgust and indignation, naturally consequent on such a discovery, one might take the opportunity of delicately alluding, in contradistinction to these wretches, to some who have given the best part of their lives to her service; to whose thoughtful care she really derived the position which she occupied, and whose whole energies were devoted to her. Such a suggestion might be made, I suppose?"

"It would have to be done with extreme delicacy, my dear Harriet," said Mr. Heath, thoughtfully. "To anyone else making such a proposal, I should say, emphatically, 'no;' but I do not mind allowing that I should not in the least object to Miss Middleham being indoctrinated with such an idea. I have every confidence in the discretion and finesse which you would use in laying it before her."

"I understand perfectly," said Mrs. Crutchley, with a smile; "and now I shall certainly not think of attempting to let my rooms."

"Right," said Mr. Heath, nodding his head; "and you will understand further, my dear Harriet, that the amount of remuneration which you will receive, by no means depends upon the length of time during which Miss Middleham is under your supervision."

A few days after this conversation, Grace and Mrs. Crutchley took up their abode at the house in Eaton-place, which, with the additions to its furniture, and a proper staff of servants, presented all the outward appearance of a well-to-do establishment. The excellent taste which characterised Mrs. Crutchley's arrangement of her own rooms had ample space and verge enough for its very effective display, in their new quarters; and, as there was no stint in the money at her disposal, she so decked with ornaments and flowers the original formal and comfortable apartments, that their legitimate owners would have had some difficulty in recognising them. A butler, ordinarily of the strictest propriety of demeanour, but occasionally—as when under the influence of a dinner-party, for example—apt to

appear with a flushed face, a roving eye, a thickness of utterance, and an impossibility of understanding anything that was said to him; a gorgeous footman, who looked splendid in his livery and his powder, but who had the one drawback of being a trifle weak in the knees; a chef, who called himself a Frenchman, but who could not open his mouth without betraying that he came from Alsace; a smart little Parisian chambermaid; a brougham and victoria, with riding-horses, &c., were amongst the items of the establishment provided for the heiress under Mrs. Crutchley's superintendence.

When once their cards were out, there was no difficulty in their making as many acquaintances as might be desired. During the whole time of her married life, Mrs. Crutchley had never deviated from the plan which she proposed to herself, when the notion of linking her fate with that of the Honourable Jim first entered into her mind, and which she adopted as soon as the wedding-ring was upon her finger; namely, to ingratiate herself with everyone, and under no provocation to be induced to give offence. It is a very difficult matter to carry out. To do it in anything like perfection, one must be an adept in the art of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, possessing two changes of countenance and two sets of speech, facile at swallowing the leek, and not above holding the candle when very odd personages require illumination. But there are people who manage it, nevertheless; just as, on the other hand, there are persons who cannot speak without morally treading on your tender foot, or roughly rubbing your slowly healing wound. The late Earl of Waddledot and his hopeful heir were by no means the only persons of the Crutchley family who were influenced by the woman who had fascinated the Honourable Jim. When the news was first promulgated, she was spoken of as "that creature" by several ladies of mature age, connections of the house of Crutchley, who, though their little annuities were secure, and the stranger could do them no harm in any way, yet chose to resent her association with the family as an impertinence. These ladies—for the most part living in cheap country towns, and provincial resorts of faded gentility—had for a long time no opportunity of being brought under the spell, exercised with such infallible effect by their newly-formed

connection. Their first signs of relenting were made on hearing that the head of the house, the venerable Earl of Waddledot, had consented to recognise his daughter-in-law, and to be reconciled to his son. Afterwards, when from time to time one or other of them would come up to town, during the fashionable or religious season, according to the direction in which her taste might lie, she would be received with such warmth of welcome at the pretty suburban house in which Harriet and her husband had established themselves; her views would be so studied, and her opinions so deferred to; above all, there was such an absolute saving of expense—by no means an unimportant feature in the estimate taken of her friends by a lady of mature age and narrow income—in the dinners provided, and the conveyances to opera or Exeter Hall, paid for by the latest addition to the family, that the hardest heart would be softened, and dislike changed into affection. Harriet was “that creature” still, but with a qualifying adjective. “That sweet creature, Mrs. James,” “that charming woman, who conducted herself with such propriety, and who has worked a reformation in our reprobate cousin,” made so favourable an impression on the old ladies, that they forgave her everything—her want of high birth, her good looks, even the allowance of five hundred a year made by Podager on his succession.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Crutchley had taken good care to continue the excellent terms existing between her and all the members of the family; besides the old maids dotted here and there over the provinces, there were many others of far greater importance with whom she stood well, for the Crutchleys had extended their ramifications in many and prosperous directions since the death of the old earl. After Podager came to the title, he discovered that his lameness was nothing like such a disqualification in the eyes of the ladies as he had been led to imagine; and within a year after his coming into the title he married Miss Brice, daughter of Brice and Co.—there was no Co.—colliery owners and blast furnace proprietors up in the North. Miss Brice, who had fifty thousand pounds for her fortune, was a good, honest girl, of the conventional type, who played a little, sung a little, drew a little, loved her husband with the devotion which, in these days, is looked upon as old-fashioned, and managed to con-

duct herself in the elevated position to which she had been called with great modesty and good sense. But the Brice alliance brought with it a considerable change in the general fortunes of the Crutchley family; scions, and even distant connections of that noble family, were very glad to dine at old Brice's hospitable table in Portland-place, where they met hard-headed, hard-handed men, who looked uncomfortable in their dress clothes, who spoke in a strange jargon, known apparently to themselves alone, and who knew little, and cared nothing, about what was passing in the West-End world. These were commercial magnates, rulers of the City, directors of leading companies, and wire-pullers in important matters. They, too, had daughters and sons with whom the younger Crutchleys formed alliances, so that at the time when the Honourable Mrs. James entered into her position as companion and chaperon to Miss Middleham, that erst impecunious family numbered among its connections many who, by the happy blending of ancestral honour and financial success, had arrived at a first-rate social status.

To all of these the Honourable Mrs. James was well known, and by all she was highly esteemed. One of her great secrets in the art of ingratiating herself was, that while she frequently found herself able to confer a favour, she made a rule of never asking one. She was always ready to fill up an unexpectedly vacated seat at dinner; to give the advantage of her matronly presence to forlorn girls at opera or ball; to play a rubber at whist when occasion required—and a very good rubber she played, always paying her money when she lost with the greatest equanimity; to forego any little pleasure of her own, for the sake of doing a good turn where she knew it would be properly appreciated; and above all, she made it a point never to incur any pecuniary obligations. People of the Brice class are very much like the rest of the world, only more so; the richer they were, the less willing were they to part with their wealth; and there were few such unpardonable and deadly sins in their eyes, as the attempt to borrow money of them. The Honourable Mrs. James divined this at once, and resolved that no such complaint should ever be made against her. There was, moreover, no reason for her adopting any such course; with the annuity granted to her by her brother-in-law, and the income arising from the investments of her own little

fortune made under Mr. Heath's guidance, she was enabled not merely to live comfortably, but to put by a sum of money yearly, in view of that rainy day which might come upon her, provided Lord Waddledot were to take it into his head to stop her allowance, or any other at present unforeseen calamity were to befall her. It was this desire for making a purse, rather than any actual pressing necessity, that induced Mrs. Crutchley to accept the engagement offered to her by her business friend; while, at the same time, the occupation was one which would give her an opportunity of rallying her friends around her, and, while she availed herself of their assistance, of showing them, as she had never hitherto had the chance of doing, how well she could fill the position of the mistress of a large establishment.

When the family had agreed upon the desirability of her taking the step proposed—and in her wisdom she had duly consulted them before coming to a decision—they one and all agreed that “something must be done for Mrs. James.” What that “something” was they were not quite unanimous upon; but it was resolved that they should all call in Eaton-place, and impress the young lady who had been fortunate enough to secure Mrs. James's services with the due sense of the aristocratic connections of her chaperon. So at different times they came, not for the purpose of leaving cards, but determined, if possible, to go in to see the heiress, and surround her with their noble effulgency. Came the Countess of Waddledot, now developed into a portly matron, blonde and handsome, with a singularly sweet smile and winning manner, and her two daughters, Lady Maud and Lady Millicent; one like her mother—tall, fair, and lymphatic; the other short, dark, and lively, recalling the characteristics of the Crutchleys. Came the Honourable Miss Fanny Limpus and the Honourable Miss Martha Limpus, ancient vestals; one volatile, the other serious; one ordinarily inhabiting Bath, the other Cheltenham; but both now temporarily resident in a combined lodging in South Andley Street, bent upon passing the three months of the London season according to their different lights. Came Lady Quodd and Mrs. Humphington, younger sisters of Lady Waddledot; married respectively to Sir Thomas Quodd, the great railway contractor, and Colonel Humphington, known as “Hairy Humphington,” formerly of the

Coldstreams. Came—and such an attention as this had never before been known in the family—the great Mr. Brice himself, chairman of three railways, owner of a county, with collieries, docks, and iron-works innumerable; who could call forth millions of money by a stroke of his pen, and cause thousands of men to tremble at his nod; but who, personally, was a nervous little man, twirling his fluffy white hat unceasingly in his hands, and speaking kindly to Grace of her dead uncle, whose friend and colleague in various business matters he had been. Came many others of the female portions of the City contingent—bankeresses and directresses, inhabiting lovely places at Clapham and Roehampton, accustomed to all the luxury that wealth can command; and, certainly not least in his own estimation or that of the family, came Viscount Podager, a handsome, fair-haired lad of nineteen, in the Guards, and a good example of the gilded youth of the period.

From one and all of these mighty personages, Grace received marked kindness and consideration. The regard for the family credit, which made them rally round their relative, would have induced them to be gracious to the young lady placed under her charge, even if Miss Middleham had been plain, poor, and uninteresting; but when they found in the heiress a very pretty girl, of simple, modest manners, some of them were almost effusive in their demonstrations of affection and delight. By some she was estimated to be wanting in style, which was anything but a drawback, inasmuch as it would give them up the opportunity of “forming” her after their own model; but it must be confessed that those holding this idea had not had much experience of dear Mrs. James, who, as the better informed well knew, would not have brooked any interference with her pupil.

So, partly owing to the influence of her chaperon's high-born connections, partly to her own wealth, pretty appearance, and modest manners, the great world lay at Grace's feet, with its denizens eager to welcome her, and to do her honour. Society of all kinds was opened for her inspection at Waddledot House, which, after having been shut up for years, and very nearly let to a club during the impecunious times of the late lord, had, under the blonde and bland countess's auspices, become not merely a most fashionable resort, but on certain stated occasions, a house of call for the

members of one of the great political parties of the country. In those noble halls Grace gazed with silent wonder and awe upon persons whose names had been familiar to her from her childhood; saw a prime minister, in an ill-made coat and an ill-washed cravat, drinking a cup of tea, and scrutinizing a bit of Sevres as though he had no idea beyond porcelain; saw a royal personage pass through the crowd, which respectfully made way for him, showering his smiles and greetings right and left as he moved along; saw world-renowned statesmen, and mighty men of valour; right-reverend fathers, in silk aprons, looking on such vanities with a mild air of protest, and getting obviously anxious as the time drew near midnight—for these reunions were generally held on a Saturday night; saw Eastern potentates blazing in jewels, and famous authors and artists, whose works she knew and loved, and who, for the most part, looked remarkably different to what she had expected.

The receptions at which the plutocracy did the honours, were more formal and less amusing than those over which the aristocracy presided, but were, in their way, equally grand. No royal personage honoured Lady Quodd's garden party, at Wimbledon, but only a few blue-blooded ones—and these principally nobles who had turned their titles to practical use, by lending them out in the City, for a consideration—loitered round the grounds, and admired the glorious breezy common, basking in the westerling sunlight; no roundly-turned episcopal legs tripped lightly over the close-shaven sward. Money was represented rather than rank—the combined efforts of a dozen of the guests would have shaken the credit of the Bank of England—intellect put in its appearance in the persons of various strange professors of literature and science; religion was to the fore in divers smug and greasy, albeit shining, lights of non-established churches.

Even the worthy vestals, Miss Martha and Miss Fanny, contributed to the building up of Mrs. James, by giving two or three festive little tea-parties, in their rooms in South Audley-street, and by placing tickets for the Royal Society lectures at Grace's disposal.

Was the heiress, the centre of all these

attentions and attractions, pleased by their novelty, and happy in herself? The first part of the question must be answered in the affirmative, but there are grave doubts as regards the latter. Young, unsophisticated, easily impressed, and grateful for all the kindness shown to her, Grace, in this her first season, might have been supremely happy, but for

The raven which ever croaked by her side,
Kept watch and ward, kept watch and ward.

Mrs. Crutchley had not forgotten the conversation held with Mr. Heath at their last interview at her little rooms in Ebury-street; and though she was grateful for the efforts made by her family, she knew that her interests would be better served by playing the game of one who, as he had frequently proved, had the power of being of material use to her. Under Harriet Crutchley's skilful manipulation, the attentions which Miss Middleham received, the compliments paid her, the interest which she excited, lost all their charm and glamour. To her wealth, and not to herself, were all these attentions paid; on the banker's heiress, not on the ingenuous debutante, was all this devotion lavished. According to the teaching of this deep-scheming woman of the world, the great ladies of society, who received Miss Middleham with more than usual cordiality, and exerted themselves in making their evenings agreeable to her, were merely animated by a desire to secure her for their sons or brothers; the pretty things said to her, apparently so spontaneously, were the result of cool calculation with a defined object; none of the men who paid her court but had beforehand possessed themselves of the contents of her uncle's will, and formed a close valuation of her fortune.

A sad view of life, indeed, to be constantly presented before a young girl's mind. No wonder that Grace Middleham began to look with a jaundiced eye upon what she had at first considered so delightful. No wonder that on the "off nights," when there were no entertainments to go to, she feared to be dull and dispirited under the reaction which might set in. And yet those "off nights" proved to Grace more pleasant than the grandest reception, or the gayest ball; for, thanks to Mrs. Crutchley's management, they were invested with a charm of their own.

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